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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1993 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 7 May 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. WARD (Canada)

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Preparation for future sessions and review of documentation

This record is subject to correction.

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SESSIONS AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTATION

1. Mr. GAUTAM (Director, Programme Division) presented the consolidated list of documents requested for future Board sessions. The first document under section A (Major policy papers) would be removed from the list because henceforth that subject would be covered in a progress report. A proposal had been made to include in that section a document on UNICEF's contribution to the World Summit for Social Development and another on UNICEF's policy on women and development.

2. With regard to section B (Progress reports), further information on the dates and frequency of publications was provided. Since there was an error in the text, he explained that biennial publications were planned for the non-budget years. In 1994, some documents would be the subject of a comprehensive report, but biennial publication would resume in 1995.

3. Section C (Other reports) indicated a new document in response to the request expressed in document E/ICEF/1993/CRP.37.

4. No change was made in the first part of section D (Annual and biennial reports); as for the second part, starting in 1995, the topics with asterisks would be covered in progress reports.

5. A consolidated list reflecting the changes would be drafted.

6. The CHAIRMAN reminded the participants of the spirit of decision 1993/2 on the Board's future work and procedures, which had emphasized the need to improve procedures and rationalize the Board's work.

7. Mrs. MOLSON (Canada) said it was her understanding that the text on UNICEF's contribution to the World Summit for Social Development would be the subject of a major policy paper. However, because it concerned a specific event and did not call for a substantive position, it would be proper for that document, like the one planned for UNICEF's policy on women and development, to be the subject of a report rather than a major policy paper.

8. Mrs. CORNAZ (Switzerland) agreed with the Canadian proposal. The document on UNICEF's contribution to the World Summit for Social Development should be placed under the section "Other reports", so long as it was not seen only as yet another regular, and less important, document. She proposed, in addition, that the question of education should be the subject of a separate chapter in that report or in the follow-up report on the World Summit for Children. Since the problem of education was crucial, her delegation proposed that, starting in 1995, basic education should be the subject of a major policy paper which would be supplemented by subsequent progress reports.

9. Mrs. DEBLAUW (United States of America) supported the Canadian delegation's proposal. In addition, she recalled the measures contained in decision 1993/2 on the rationalization of the Executive Board's work. Unfortunately, it seemed that the measures proposed in that decision had not materialized. The Board

(Mrs. Deblauw, United States)

continued to struggle with an unwieldy agenda. The multiplicity and overlap of items to be discussed made review difficult within the allotted time limits. The Board's agenda should be more restrictive, and more specific guidelines for UNICEF should be clearly drafted.

10. Her delegation was concerned by the fact that several draft decisions provoked hours of sometimes hair-splitting discussions which could be avoided. It was important for informal meetings to be held as soon as it had become obvious that reconciliation of positions was necessary. Her delegation urged the member States not to overlook several criteria for ensuring concision and exactness applicable to drafting resolutions. It also recalled that decision 1993/2 stated that "the Executive Board should limit as much as possible the enactment of resolutions or decisions to matters directly related to the governance and policies of UNICEF".

11. Lastly, her delegation recalled that the ongoing work of restructuring the United Nations system in the social, economic and related fields would have a significant impact on the organization of the Executive Board's work.

12. Mr. POST (Netherlands) endorsed the ideas expressed by the United States representative on the restructuring of the Board's activities and draft resolutions. He felt that each draft resolution should, at the very least, reflect majority opinion within the Board. Referring to the consolidated list, he said that documents on women and development were mentioned twice, and that biennial publication of the report on national capacities was also mentioned, contrary to what had been indicated in the corresponding resolution. Moreover, several documents which were for consideration included proposals for decisions or resolutions, which made them documents requiring follow-up.

13. He congratulated the secretariat on the work concerning the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, but pointed to the need to give countries time to apply the resolutions adopted. It might be appropriate to plan a discussion on that subject every year.

14. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) said he would like to see practical changes in document presentation. Each document should include the agenda item to which it referred.

15. With regard to the Swiss delegation's proposal, he felt that education was an important item which should be the subject of progress reports.

16. Mr. CASSON (Australia) supported the views expressed by the United States and the Netherlands. It was regrettable that no rules of procedure applied to the work of the drafting groups. That would perhaps be a way of avoiding the type of situations that had arisen. He thought, as did the Netherlands representative, that a resolution should not be introduced by a single country. Each resolution should at least express the opinion of the majority of the members. In principle, resolutions should deal only with the agenda items under consideration.

17. Mrs. ULTVERT (Sweden) said that she agreed with the views expressed during the meeting and, in particular, supported the proposals by the representative of

(Mrs. Ultvert, Sweden)

Switzerland concerning basic education. The question should be dealt with in a policy paper in 1994.

18. Mr. GAUTAM (Director, Programme Division) replied to questions from representatives. He agreed with the proposal by the Canadian and other delegations concerning the classification of the document concerning the World Summit for Social Development. He provided additional details on the frequency of progress reports and on the exception made for 1995 because of the importance of the planned World Summit. He agreed with the representative of Switzerland that basic education should be dealt with in a major policy paper in 1995, and provided the explanations requested by the representative of the Netherlands concerning the inclusion of decisions in certain documents "for consideration".

19. Ms. KITTANI (Assistant Secretary), responding to a point raised by the representative of Pakistan concerning the need for all documents to bear an indication of the agenda item to which they referred, explained that the practice had not been followed thus far because the final agenda was not established until well after UNICEF documents had been submitted. Efforts would be made to remedy the situation.

20. The CHAIRMAN summed up the ideas which had been put forward, referring in particular to the need for informal meetings to be conducted in a more structured manner, agendas to be more limited in scope and resolutions always to bear close relation to the items under consideration.

21. Mr. GUERRERO (Observer for the Philippines) said that, in order to comply with the requirements of the process of revitalization and restructuring currently in progress, meetings should be kept short, pointless rhetoric avoided and the emphasis placed on action and coordination. With that in view, he proposed limiting the length of Executive Board resolutions to three paragraphs. The first should recall the provisions of relevant resolutions adopted previously, the second should justify the measures called for, and the third should focus on the action taken or the authorization granted by UNICEF. In that way, the Board would become a management body whose function would be to authorize UNICEF to act without embarking on long theoretical discussions on questions already considered by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies.

22. If the purpose of a Board resolution was to consider the results of the implementation of a previous resolution, it should confine itself to a few paragraphs recalling the resolutions and decisions already adopted and indicating whether the resolution in question had been implemented or not. If it had, the Board should express its satisfaction; if not, it should indicate what measures should be taken in order to obtain results. By applying those criteria, it should be possible to obtain resolutions no longer than one page, which could be more easily considered.

23. It would also be useful to increase the number of informal consultations so as to reduce the number of plenary meetings devoted to the consideration of resolutions. Many delegations had only a single representative, and it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to take part in several meetings at the same time.

24. Mrs. MOLSON (Canada) said that it would be useful to draw up a policy paper on education for 1995. It was the task of the Executive Board to decide what documents were necessary and when they should appear. Delegations should be able to prepare themselves for the consideration of questions as a whole, so that they would then have sound reasons for asking for a document to be drawn up. That was not the case at present, since no information was available on the calendar of future meetings.

25. Mr. MINAGAWA (Japan) asked the secretariat to consider the possibility of compiling a compendium of all country programmes every year, to be submitted to members of the Board for information. There was no single document giving an overall description of action by UNICEF in the field. A record sheet would be kept for each country programme showing basic national data, the size of the budget and the UNICEF field office staff involved, together with a brief description of the main programme activities and the objectives achieved. The record sheets would then be collected in a volume of around 150 pages.

26. Mr. JOLLY (Deputy Executive Director, Programmes) said that an overall description of all the activities carried out by UNICEF during the previous year could be found in the report of the Executive Director, which was based on the reports of the UNICEF representatives in the various countries. The future guidelines for UNICEF programmes in future years were set out in the country programme descriptions which were submitted to the Board and approved by it. Fortunately, the country programmes were five-year programmes carried out over different periods. It would be very difficult for the Board to consider 20 to 30 programmes in the same year, and that was why consideration of them was staggered over a period of time. In addition, UNICEF was continuing to compile statistics by country which were being stored on computer. The secretariat was quite prepared to cooperate with the Japanese and other delegations which so desired in considering ways to improve the current presentation of country programmes.

27. Mr. CASSON (Australia) expressed interest in the proposal by the Japanese delegation, but pointed out that it would require an integrated data-processing system for the drawing up of reports. He doubted whether such a system existed, and hoped that informal discussions could be held on the subject.

28. Mr. KAYUMOV (Observer for Tajikistan) expressed support for the proposal by the Japanese delegation. He thanked UNICEF for the attention it had given to the problems of his country. As the mission planned for 1992 had been unable to visit his country because of the difficult situation prevailing there, his Government wished to invite UNICEF to send a new mission, whose safety it would guarantee. The civil war had caused enormous material damage, of which the main victims had been women and children. The food situation was extremely serious and his country therefore had high hopes of the assistance which UNICEF could provide.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, when Board decision 1993/2 had been adopted, the Board had agreed that informal discussions on work and procedures relating to the country programme process would continue, leading to formal consideration of the matter at the 1993 regular session. The views expressed at the organizational session would then be taken into account, together with General Assembly resolution 47/199. He pointed out that, at the current session, the country programmes had been dealt with in a different manner. He invited

(The Chairman)

delegations to give their views on the experience and to say whether they had found it a constructive and effective method, and whether the informal meetings had been useful.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.